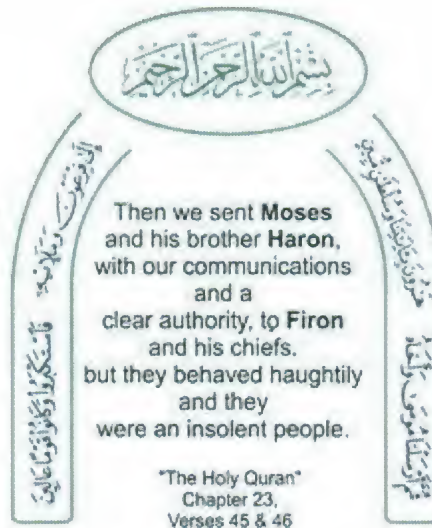


# Sheikh Haron

Muslim Cleric & Peace Activist



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1<sup>st</sup> November 2013

To: Prime Minister Tony Abbott

Parliament House, Canberra, ACT 2600

Dear Mr Abbott,

## **An invitation for a live debate!**

On Monday 28 October 2013 during your visiting Australian troops at the Tarin Kot military base in Afghanistan you marked the 'ending' of Australia's mission in Afghanistan. You announced that the ADF mission in Uruzgan will be complete by year-end and the majority of Australian troops will return home, with around 300 to remain in Kandahar and Kabul in non-combative roles. You addressed the troops and you said, "Australia's longest war is ending, not with victory, not with defeat, but with, we hope, an Afghanistan that is better for our presence here." This war was not Australia's war as described by you. It was America's war fought for American political and economic interests in the region. Australia was only used by America for its imperial designs as it has been used in the past by imperial powers.

The war has been a resounding failure. Notwithstanding twelve long years, 20,000 soldiers used, 40 dead, 260 wounded, and close to \$8 billion spent, the war has failed. It is common expectation that post-occupation Afghanistan will see the Taliban return to dominate power.

As for the security situation, US-installed President Hamid Karzai strongly criticised the NATO effort about four weeks ago, saying that, "On the security front the entire Nato exercise was one caused Afghanistan a lot of suffering, a lot of loss of life, and no gains because the country is not secure." The failure on the security front is also highlighted by the

fact that even after twelve years have to make surprise visit with heavy security. Neither is the world, both east and west, any safer after this invasion. On the contrary, it has fermented more anger and grievance in an entirely new generation, the consequences of which can be expected to become manifest in years to come.

Claiming the mission is coming to an end whilst 300 troops will remain is disingenuous. The war does not end until every invading western troop leaves Afghanistan. Australian involvement does not end until every Australian troop leaves.

You spoke emotionally about the forty Australian soldiers who died in the war. As for the tens of thousands of Afghans who died because of the western invasion, they were not deemed worthy of mention because, as reflected in the actions of western policymakers more strongly than in their words, the people of 'third-world' countries are not of equal worth.

Australians including Muslim community, non-Muslims and Muslim peace activists including myself, security experts etc. have consistently warned against the consequences of this war from day one, they condemned it in unequivocal terms, they exposed its reality as an American war and demanded the withdrawal of Australian troops. This very position attracted only attacks and thoughtless censure from politicians and media. Yet here is the new Prime Minister now, after afflicting untold misery on an entire population, affirming, in practice if not in words, the correctness of our position.

Since the message of my letters to the Australian authorities couldn't be heard, I wrote letters to some of the families of the deceased Australian soldiers and I requested them to voice against this war. Although those families like the majority of the Australians were fed up with the wrong foreign policy of the government but for some reasons they could not speak out against the government. The media and politicians found this as a good opportunity to try hard to convince the public that Sheikh Haron's letters were 'offensive'. The government first with its "media arm" then with the Australian Federal Police tried to take revenge. I was arguing that the charges against me were invalid because they infringed on my implied constitutional freedom of political communication, upon appeal to the High Court of Australia the six-judge panel split 3-3 over the issue, failing to achieve a majority vote in my favor, the lower court's unanimous decision was left to stand. As a result, and after four years being on bail conditions from communication with any member or ex-member, or their relatives, of any army around the world, finally I was sentenced to 300 hours community service and two year good behaviour bond.

In this letter I don't want to go to details about my court case, I just pointed to that very briefly to make it clear that when I talk about "peace" it's not just playing with words but I



am very serious and I have paid a price for that. The majority of the Australian citizens including myself want peace on the earth including Australia, they want a secured world including Australia.

I claim that the previous Australian governments' policy has had a significant role in jeopardizing the security and peace in the world especially in Australia. If you agree with me you don't need to respond to this letter. However, if you disagree please respond and let me know if you and/or your team are happy to have a live debate with me and/or my team. In the debate if you prove I am wrong I promise to support the Australian government's policy for the rest of my life, and I will do my best to encourage people to back the government. However, if it is proven in our debate that the government's policy has endangered Australia, if it is proven that the government has made Australia unsafe, if it is proven that **Australia and Australians will be attacked**, in that case I expect you to change the Australia's policy.

Regards,



Sheikh Haron

Cc:

- Australian Human Rights Commission
- Amnesty International
- Opposition Leader, Mr Bill Shorten
- Attorney General, Mr George Brandis
- Shadow Attorney General, Mr Mark Dreyfus
- Minister For Defence, Mr David Albert Lloyd Johnston
- Shadow Minister for Defence, Mr Stephen Michael Conroy
- Minister for Justice, Mr Michael Keenan
- Shadow Minister for Justice, Mr David Feeney
- District Court, Mr Marien
- CDPP (Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecution)
- ASIO (Australia Security & Intelligence Organisation)
- AFP (Australian Federal Police)